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UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Report of the second meeting, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 26 and 27 October 1990

SUMMARY

In order to maintain the momentum of the World Conference on Education for All and the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Education, the second meeting of the Joint Committee was held in Paris on 26 and 27 October 1990. Ms. Lisbet Palme, Chairman of UNICEF Executive Board, served as the Chairman of the meeting, which deliberated on the progress of the follow-up work to the Jomtien Conference by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF and expressed its appreciation. The Joint Committee also endorsed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration in the 1990s, adopted by the World Summit for Children, and further recommended eight priority areas for cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF. These include building a monitoring system linked to Education for All goals; ensuring girls' and women's education; training and staff development; strengthening national planning capacities; promoting innovative experiences, including their analyses and dissemination; supporting selected research on innovative child care activities; undertaking a feasibility study of the mass provision of strategic inputs; and working jointly on the ethos and content of basic education, combining basic skills with cultural aspects for human development.

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Introduction

The second meeting of the Joint Committee on Education began at 3 p.m. on 26 October 1990 under the chairmanship of Mr. Yahya Aliyu, Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board. Mr. Aliyu noted that the follow up to the Jomtien Conference was proceeding on pace and that at the national level structures were already being put in place for the implementation of the Education for All goals. Advocacy for those goals were also gaining significant ground. Lastly, he welcomed the adoption and prompt ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the historic convening of the World Summit for Children.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, remarked in his opening statement that if present demographic trends continued, 50 per cent of the world's population would be below the age of 15 years. Today, he observed that many children were dying unnecessarily because of a lack of solidarity. The struggle against ignorance and poverty should claim immediate action. He felt the two important gatherings on education and children had given enough elements for action, and the motto for the International Year of Literacy, "Time for Action", aptly captured the moment. Imagination would be important to find new modalities for action that would influence the decision-makers and reach the people.

Mr. Mayor informed the group of his letter dated 11 October 1990 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on basic education in the world. He noted that the second conference on Least Developed Countries in Paris promoted, among other things, the Education for All goals. The World Summit for Children had also highlighted these goals, and overall was a turning point for children in particular and development in general.

However, to translate all this into action, greater focus on cooperation "with intimate knowledge" would be needed at inter-agency, regional and subregional levels.

The Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. James P. Grant, reflected that since the Second World War, the last 12 months must be seen as the most meaningful for children and education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been adopted, and with 50 ratifications at the time of the World Summit for Children, had come into force quicker than any other convention. Although he felt that the World Summit for Children had made a contribution to furthering a "first call" for children, of greater importance, however, was the recognition of the rights of children to education as well as their parents. He strongly felt that development could not succeed without education.

Mr. Grant noted that a lot had been set in motion yet very few children were benefiting. Action had not yet reached children, which had prompted the need for the World Summit for Children. No other meeting had ever been held where so many heads of Governments and States had committed themselves to such

quantitative goals within a given time frame for implementation and action. Mr. Grant concluded that this incredible opportunity must be fully seized.

1. Election of officers

Ms. Lisbet Palme, Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board, was elected by acclamation as Chairman of the second meeting of the Joint Committee. Mr. Andre Kramp (Suriname, UNESCO Executive Board) and Mr. Gabriel Fernandez (Liberia, UNICEF Executive Board) were elected as Rapporteurs (see annex I).

2. Adoption of the programme of work

The draft programme of work as presented was adopted by the members (see Annex II).

3. Activities of UNESCO and UNICEF between the first and second meetings

The World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien represented for UNESCO more than just another conference, it was also a framework for action and cooperation for "making a difference in people's lives". Priorities within UNESCO had changed accordingly to place greater focus on action at the national level. Towards that end $2 million had been re-allocated from savings for follow up of the action plan approved in July 1990.

It was remarked that the 1980s had been a disastrous decade for education, health and children. However, today it was heartening to observe a shift in priorities and policies at the highest level. Many multilateral and bilateral agencies were shifting to basic education. "Client orientation" - understanding the needs of those for whom the organizations would be working - was very important. UNESCO needed partnership at the country level to bring the Action Plan to full success. UNESCO's decentralized field structure must, therefore, be put to work jointly with country and regional offices of UNICEF and other partners.

Regional programmes for training and capacity building of national personnel involved in basic education and literacy would be an important task entrusted to the International Institute for Educational Planning. Other aspects include the strengthening of regional research networks and information exchange among countries.

UNICEF regional and country offices were expected to be a choice partner in these efforts.

Since the first meeting of the Joint Committee, the UNICEF Executive Board had endorsed:

(a) The Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All and the Framework for Action;

(b) The strategy of "primary education as the cutting edge";

(c) Other recommendations made by the Joint Committee at its first meeting.

UNICEF had also convened an Ad Hoc Education Advisory Group (New York, 9-11 July 1990) to help formulate UNICEF's work programme on education.

Further, an Education Cluster with a Chief and five members had been established in the Programme Division, New York headquarters, with specialists in different disciplines and regional advisers in each region. They would be supplemented by programme officers in each country office as appropriate. A staff training package was being developed in cooperation with other agencies.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child had come into force with ratifications of 50 countries as at 30 September, 1990. Consequently, this would greatly facilitate the advocacy and implementation of the goal of universalization of basic education for all.

Also, in September 1990 at United Nations Headquarters, the World Summit for Children had been convened, bringing together 71 heads of State and Government and 88 observers, who had adopted a Declaration and a Plan of Action.

Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

The film "3 4 1", presented at the World Summit for Children, was viewed and it was unanimously decided that its potent message necessitated its translation into all the languages so that no child, parent or leader would be omitted from receiving its message. The Committee was informed that the film had been shown in 80 countries and presently existed in English, French and Spanish.

The greatest challenge for UNICEF and its partners was to make the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the Summit to stand like the Convention and have a life of its own. The Declaration and the Plan of Action were built on the Jomtien model and the United Nations agencies would need to take the lead in complying with its recommendations, especially paragraph 35 (i). UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) could perhaps be among the very first to take that lead.

4. Highlights of the Committee's discussions on perspectives of the UNESCO/UNICEF cooperative programme on basic education

The Committee considered that the three major meetings of the year - the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All, the Second Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Paris and the World Summit for Children in New York - provided sufficient elements for action by the two agencies. Further, UNICEF's large representation in 129 countries and UNESCO's long-standing experience in education gave great potential for meaningful action through joint selective programming.

A joint paper prepared by the two secretariats entitled "Perspectives of the UNESCO/UNICEF cooperative programme in basic education" (see annex III), which addressed future areas of cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF, was presented to the Committee. Reviewing the paper, Committee members were of the opinion that the paper provided useful elements for programmable cooperation. These proposed areas of cooperation were extensively used as the basis for discussion.

To achieve the education goals for the 1990s, some felt that each nation would need massive amounts of assistance. A new strategy was needed which would be met by four criteria in adopting an integrated community-based development programme. The criteria would be :

(a) Cost-effectiveness;

(b) Yield multiplying effect;

(c) Pooling expertise;

(d) Pooling all national resources.

Many members expressed the need for new methods, which should be simple and relevant. Where educational tools already existed and were viable, extensive use should be made of them. The latter, in particular, would enhance the countries' absorption capacity. Sustainability was also viewed as equipping nations to be agents of change. Sharing lessons learned from success stories, it was pointed out that in one specific instance, the Bible and the climate were important elements that brought about transformation and development. Education was a weapon in understanding the environment.

Finally, it was generally agreed that UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation should provide technical support and training and, in the monitoring of their programmes, maximum use of national experts should be made.

The recommendations which were adopted reflect more fully the range of thoughts expressed in the discussions.

5. Recommendations

The Joint Committee on Education,

Bearing in mind the educational goals for the year 2000:

(a) Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children;

(b) Reduction of adult illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy, the appropriate models to be determined in each country.

Noting with satisfaction the decisions taken by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 134th session, and by the UNICEF Executive Board at its April 1990 session, in response to the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Education at its first meeting.

Conscious of the great significance of the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children in New York on 30 September 1990.

Reaffirming the right to education for all children, as indicated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Aware of the activities undertaken by the UNESCO and UNICEF secretariats since the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Education in the field of basic education and, in particular, in following up on the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien.

Expressing the wish that the UNESCO and UNICEF secretariats, in the spirit of following up on the Jomtien Conference and the World Summit, continue to explore all possibilities for joint action and, on that basis, to undertake a broader and renewed programme of cooperation.

Recommends that the Executive Boards of UNESCO and UNICEF:

1. Endorse the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action;

2. Call upon their respective secretariats to reflect on the goals and plan of action of the World Summit, particularly the provisions for follow-up actions and monitoring at the national and international levels in the programmes of work they will submit to their respective governing bodies for approval before the end of 1991;

3. Endorse the following priority areas for cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF:

(i) Building a monitoring system linked to education-for-all goals, paying attention to new resources, accessibility, quality and

learning achievement, and focusing especially on building up national capacities in this field;

(ii) Ensuring girls' and women's education, including the development and use of the "third channel" as appropriate;

(iii) Training and staff development in basic education, making maximum use of national capacity;

(iv) Strengthening the planning capacities, as well as the cooperation between various ministries, particularly in least developed countries, which are responsible for formulating child-oriented policies and programmes, and advocating appropriate action to meet basic learning needs;

(v) Promoting innovative experiences in basic education, including their analysis and dissemination, making full use of and, where necessary, establishing regional networking;

(vi) Supporting selected research on innovative child-care activities at the community level, primary education and literacy through national universities and other centres at the national and regional levels;

(vii) Undertaking a feasibility study of the mass provision of strategic inputs, e.g., educational materials and equiment, frequently lacking for effective and relevant basic education practice;

(viii) Working jointly on the ethos and content of basic education, combining basic skills with cultural aspects for human development;

4. Request both secretariats to propose ways and means of strengthening their cooperation at the field level to achieve the goals set by the World Conference on Education for All and by the World Summit for Children;

5. Review, in due course, the programme of cooperation as undertaken by the UNESCO and UNICEF secretariats.

6. Closure

The second meeting of the Joint Committee on Education was closed by the Chairman at 4.20 p.m. on 27 October 1990.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

UNICEF	Ms. Lisbet Palme, Chairman, UNICEF Executive Board Mr. Gabriel Fernandez, Chairman Programme Committee, UNICEF Executive Board Ms. Yvette Le Quellec (France) Ms. Theresa C. Garuba (Nigeria) Mr. Stanislaw Trepcynski (Poland)
UNESCO	Ms. Ingrid Eide (Norway) Mr. Punisa A. Pavlovic (Yugoslavia) Mr. A. Baba Ould Deida (Mauritania) Mr. Andre Kramp (Suriname) Mr. Asavia Wandira (Uganda) Mr. Adul Wichiencharoen (Thailand)
UNICEF secretariat	Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director Dr. Nyi Nyi, Director, Programme Division Dr. Aklilu Habte, Special Adviser to the Executive Director, Programme Division Ms. Majorie Newman-Black, Historian/Editor, Executive Board Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Geneva
UNESCO secretariat	Mr. Frederico Mayor, Director-General Mr. Colin N. Power, Assistant Director-General for Education Mr. Akihiro Chiba, Director, Bureau of Coordination of Operational Activities Mr. Pio Rodriguez, Secretary, Executive Board Mr. Dieter Berstecher, Inter-agency Cooperation in Basic Education Mr. Alphonse Tay, Inter-agency Cooperation in Basic Education Ms. Ulrika Peppler, Inter-agency Cooperation in Basic Education
UNESCO Executive Board	Mr. Yahya Aliyu (Nigeria) Chairman of the Executive Board

Annex II

AGENDA

Friday, 26 October 1990

1500-1800 hours, first session

1. Welcome by Mr. Y. Aliyu, Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board

2. Opening statements by Mr. F. Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, and Mr. J. P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF

3. Election of the Chairman and two Rapporteurs

4. Report on relevant activities of the two organizations since the first meeting on the Joint Committee on Education

   (a) UNESCO

   (b) UNICEF

5. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Dinner at the UNESCO restaurant (hosted by UNESCO)

Saturday, 27 October 1990

1000-1300 hours, second session

6. Perspectives of the UNESCO/UNICEF Cooperative Programme in Basic Education

7. Adoption of recommendations

8. Date/venue of next meeting

9. Other business

10. Closing statements

Lunch (hosted by UNICEF)

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working documents		Document No.
1.	Draft programme of work	JCE/1
2.	Report on action taken to follow up on the World Conference, prepared by UNESCO	JCE/2
3.	UNICEF report on activities between the first and second meetings of the Joint Committee on Education	JCE/3
4.	World Summit for Children	JCE/4
5.	Perspectives of the UNESCO/UNICEF cooperative programme in basic education	JCE/5
Information documents		
6.	Provisional list of participants	JCE/INF.1
7.	Provisional list of documents	JCE/INF.2
8.	Recommendations of the first meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education	JCE/INF.3
Other relevant documents		
9.	Education for all, an action plan by UNESCO to follow-up on the World Conference at Jomtien	
10.	World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s	